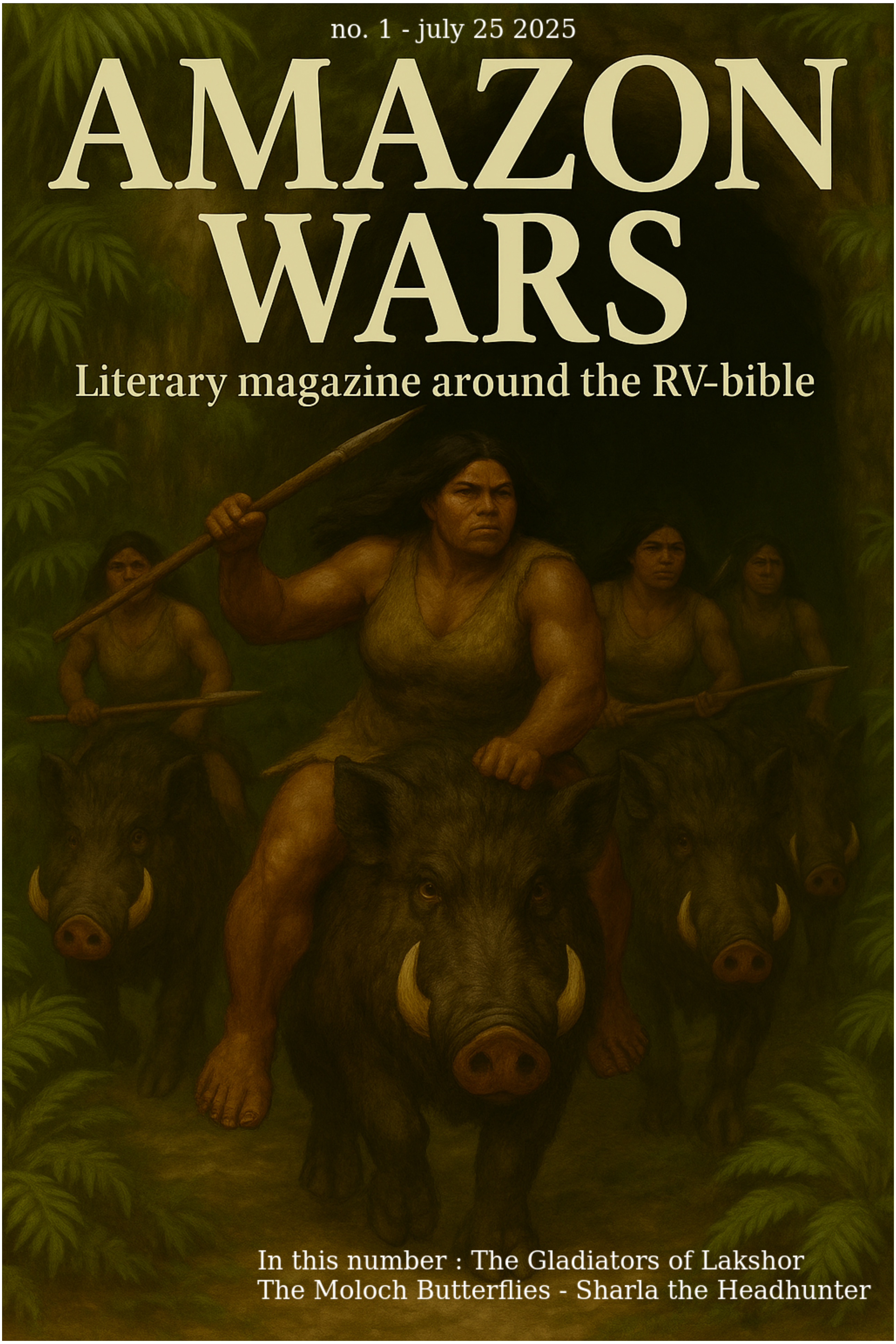
no. 1 - july 25 2025

AMAZON WARS

Literary magazine around the RV-bible



In this number : The Gladiators of Lakshor
The Moloch Butterflies - Sharla the Headhunter

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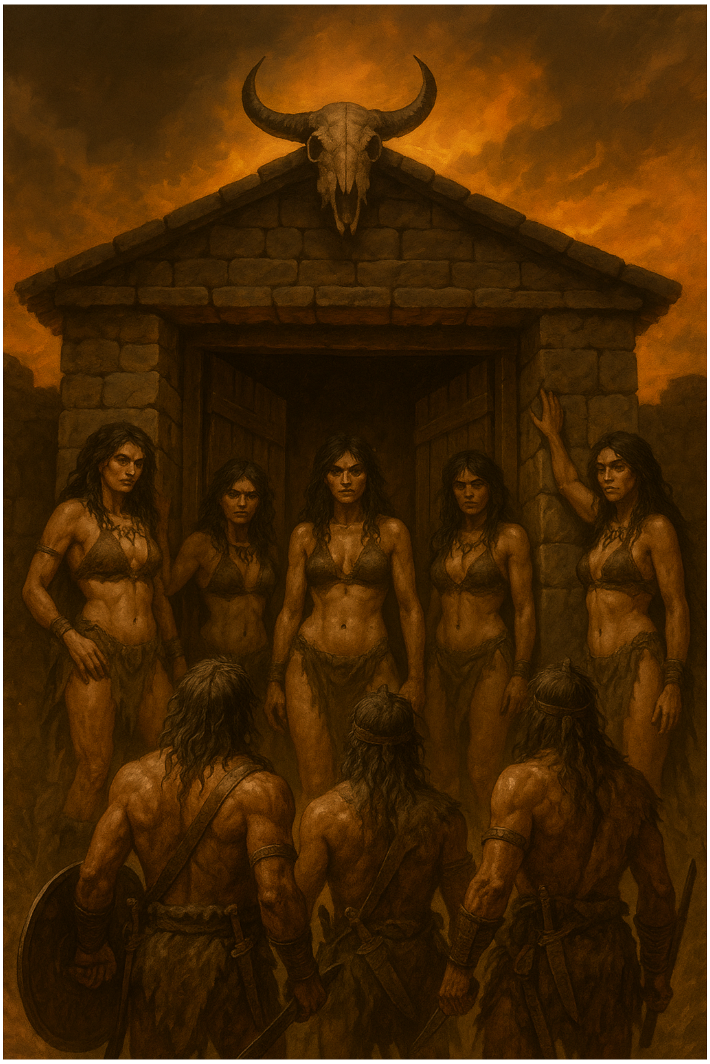
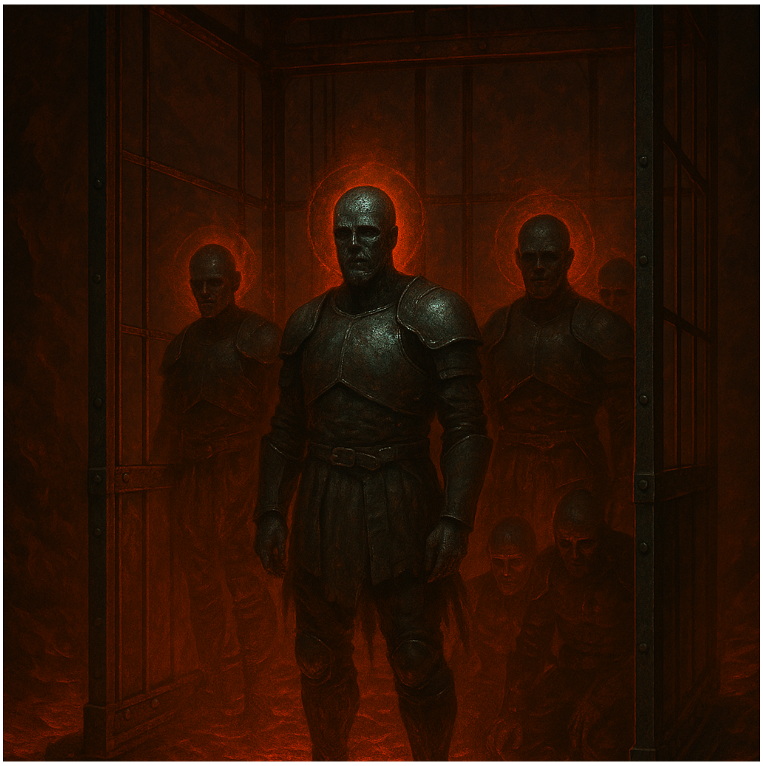
The Gladiators of Lakshor



The warriors didn't have any fear, as their souls were traveling through the realms of dead. Them was promised that after a short trip they would come to the house of the most beautiful women. They would show them all the pleasures of the afterlife as a reward for all what they had done. But they didn't know what was waiting for them. The women were indeed the most beautiful, and the men could choose whoever they wanted, but in the middle of the night these women would kill their souls, as they were the women of second death. This the men didn't know, as it was never told to them. Then the essence of their souls would be taken to the realm deeper than hell, a realm called Lakshor. The men didn't know anything about the conspiracies of death. They really believed that they could live the rest of eternity with these women, as that was which they had told them since their earliest childhood. They didn't know that earth was just a trainingschool for them, to prepare them for a greater war : the war of the dead. No one had any understanding of the horrors of Lakshor, but they would find out soon. In Lakshor the horror-king Metulidan throned. He was a skeleton with a high shrieking voice. He enjoyed it that there were so many spoiling tales about death, that it would be a paradise with well-shaped women, especially for those who would die in battle. Many young men dreamt to become a great warrior for this reason. They didn't fear death anymore, but desired it. Metulidan had chosen the most voluptuous women of Lakshor to seduce the fallen men at the gates of death. They would lure them to their house in the realms of the dead. On the top of their house the skull of a horned animal hang. The men had to get the feeling that they would have arrived in the eternal huntingfields. How their young dreams would turn into a nightmare. In Lakshor there was an eternal war : the war of the dead, or some might say : the war of the damned. It was a place worse than everlasting damnation. In Lakshor there was everlasting slavery.



As the night fell the women had prepared their knives to do the job. They had done this many times before. Some of the women already worked for threehundred years in this house. Metulidan called it : the house of seduction. It was one of his best webs in the realms of the dead. When the sleeping men had been finally killed for the second time, the essences of their soul woke up, and they rose up in frozen tragedy, not knowing what had happened to them. For the women it was very easy now to lead the men to the city of Lakshor. Behind the house there was a hidden gate of lava, which was in earlier times a sea of fire. Here was an elevator by which the men would descend to Lakshor. In this elevator the women had another job to do. They had to give the men a new armor. To the men it was a strange prison. They had to become warriors again, but now it was forever. The men couldn't speak yet, as their soul-essence was still between sleeping and awakening. They had lost so many pieces of their mind, and a light paralyzing aura was around their head. The women took some liquid metal out of a sort of bag and smeared it on their head and faces. An awful stench was coming from the blend. Then they covered the metal by a sort of dark skin which looked like it was from a sort of animal.

After about forty days in the elevator they came into the city of Lakshor. They were still not totally awake, but they started to react to the smell of the city. It was a very foul stench. The elevator stopped in a huge arena. Here they would have their first fight. A tall red man called Strelon showed up. He looked very dreadfull. The men got helmets on, and were pushed towards the huge red man. It was almost like a giant. He had a dark low voice, saying : 'Be prepared to die many times. The realms of the city of Lakshor are deep.' The red man soon tore them apart like they were dolls. At the end of the fight they were nothing but ghosts. The women gathered the shatters and by the liquid metal they could build them up again. It was a sort of strange magnetic glue, keeping the parts together. Then they had to appear before the horror-king. It was in a hall behind the first arena. In the distance the horror-king sat on a huge throne. Metulidan was shouting : 'How could you not defeat the red man ?' The men didn't say anything. One of them called Edmolin suddenly got more and more of his consciousness back. He asked : 'What is the use of this all ?' Metulidan started to laugh but didn't say anything. In a strange sense Metulidan liked the boy. He seemed to be the youngest of them, and soon Metulidan decided he wanted the boy as his servant. The boy was tender and not made to be a gladiator. As the men were led to the next arena, Metulidan took the boy, and told him he could serve in the kitchen. When Edmolin got there he started to realize that there was so much meat instead of other sort of food. There was meat in all sorts and in many different colours.

Edmolin got his own room, and more and more he started to realize how lucky he was. The king often went to gladiator-wars in the arena's, and often he took the boy with him. Often heads got cut off, while the horror-king often used these scalps to decorate the city. One day Metulidan called for the boy, who was working in the kitchen at that moment. The horror-king showed a picture of a girl with pink clothes. The girl was very beautiful in the eyes of Edmolin. 'When you have become grown-up,' the horror-king said, 'you will marry her.'

'Why ?' the boy asked. 'Because I want you to take over my kingdom,' the horror-king said, 'and then you need to have a woman.' The boy sighed. Since that day the boy could only think about the words of the king. When years went by, he got to see her, they married and got the kingdom in their hands. The horror-king had left in a mysterious way. No one knew where he had gone to. The boy had grown-up now, and found out that his woman was the daughter of a snake-farmer. She had an obsession for snakes, and she wanted to have them everywhere throughout the royal place. The big ones she wanted to have in the hall where they were sleeping. It was a very huge hall and there was a very huge bed with a ceiling and with veils and curtains. The snakes here were also very huge and tall. Edmolin didn't feel comfortable with it, but as it was the wish of his woman he was willing to get used to it. Sometimes before they got to sleep the girl got into a fight with such a snake, and very often she got bitten horribly, but she still wanted to have the snakes in their room. The snakes wouldn't eat them when they were sleeping, for they were tamed in that sense. The woman found out that these snakes had lusts to fight, so she made the decision to put some of them into the arena's, so that the gladiators could take it over. Edmolin wanted to stop the arena's, but his woman said that it was part of the law here, and the law was forever.

One day a wild man from the wilderness came into the royal place. He said he was a wanderer. He said that he wanted to become a gladiator in change for food and care. The woman thought it was a good idea, and often she went to the arena to watch him. He was a very skilled warrior, and he also wrestled with snakes and crocodiles. One day he had to appear before the throne of Edmolin. Edmolin asked him where he was coming from. 'My Lord,' the wild man spoke, 'I come from the land of tragedy. There was so much dryness there, that I decided to wander, and so I came here finally.'

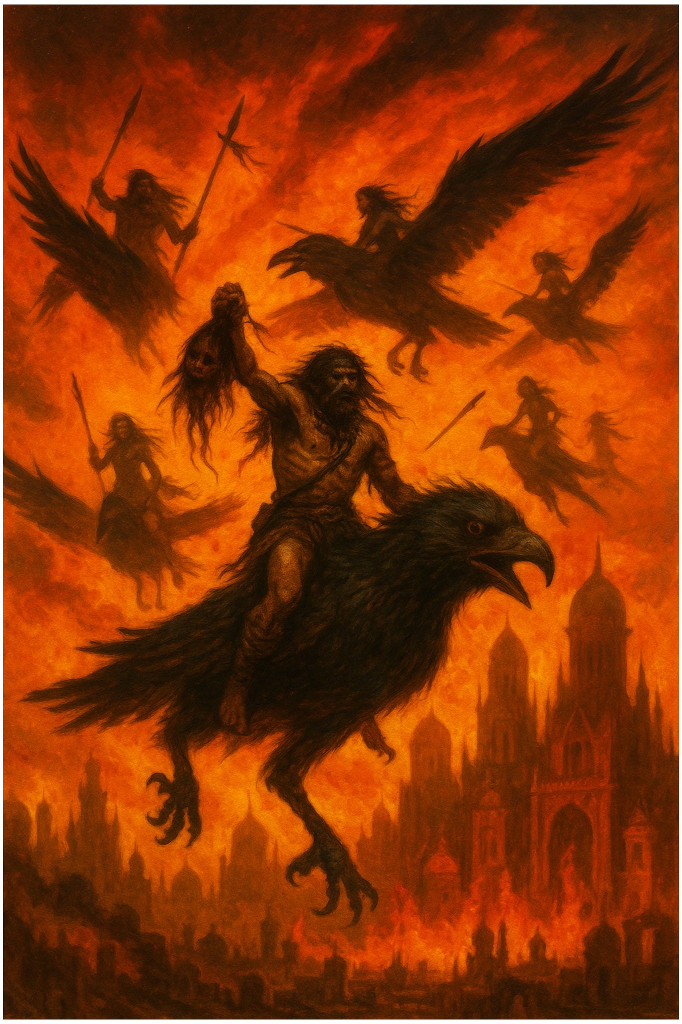
'Where is the land of tragedy,' the king asked. 'It is at the westside of you kingdom, my Lord,' the wild man spoke.

'How is that place a victim of dryness ?' the king asked.

'Oh, my Lord,' the wild man almost stuttered, 'a kingdom wilder than us invaded our land. They took our souls away. We only have a body. They have taken our rivers away. They have imprisoned my whole tribe. I'm the only survivor.' Then the wild man asked if the king would send an army of gladiators to the land.

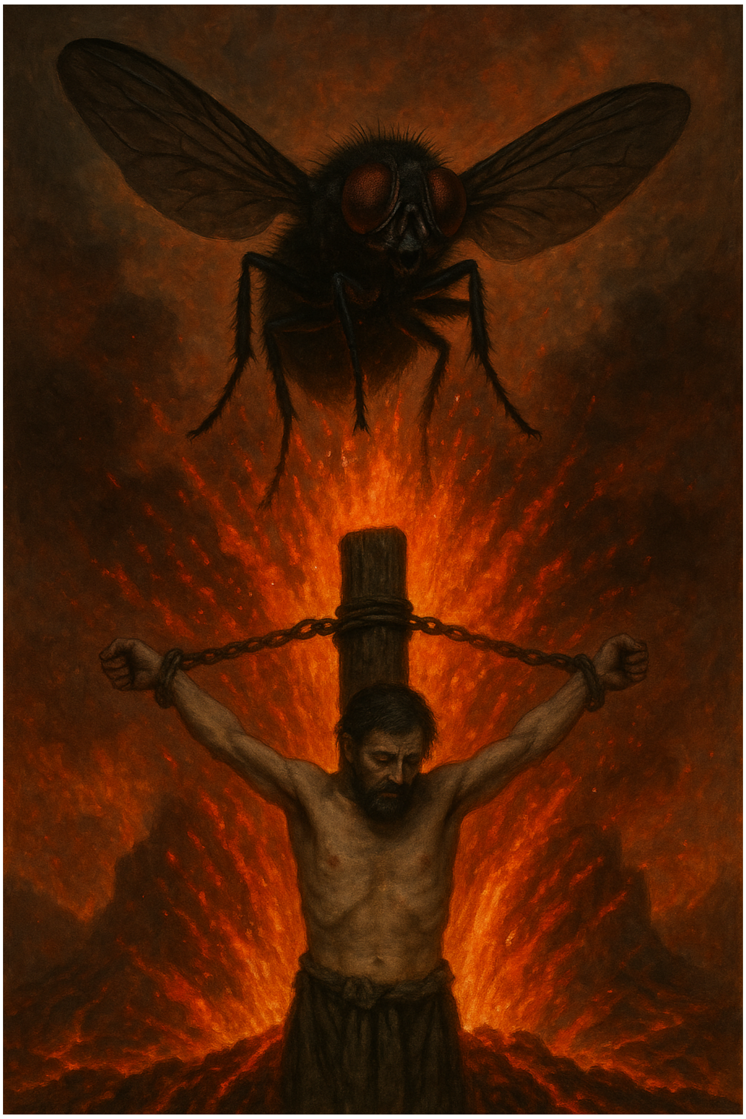
The gladiators had to travel for three and a half years until they reached the land of tragedy. It was a wilderness of great loneliness, but after months of searching they found the invaders. The invaders were wilder than the gladiators, but the gladiators had a greater number. It was a long and bloody war. Finally the wild tribe had the scalps of all the gladiators, and they moved towards the city of

Lakshor. They had birds of prey on which they could fly away, so it didn't take them more than a couple of months to get there. The men were so wild, and even their women, so they could easily invade the city of Lakshor. But when they saw Edmolin, the king, they trembled in fear. Suddenly they bowed down before him. He had a blue triangle above his head, which was the sign of their gods. 'All our kingdoms are yours,' the wild men and women said. And this is how Lakshor grew in size in one day. Lakshor was now greater than hell and heaven together. Because the wild men and women had a lust to fight a lot, they became the new gladiators of Lakshor. But as the kingdom grew the laws became bloodier more and more. And the law demanded that by the blood the kingdom would become greater. Not only would they have their houses of the most beautiful women in the realms of the dead, but also in the realms of hell and heaven.



After awhile the king found out why it had to be so bloody. The wild men and women who came from the west worshipped a blood-sucking fly. If there wasn't enough blood sacrificed to this fly, it would die, and it couldn't lead or guard this wild tribe anymore. And it was like by this blood the fly could make its women so beautiful. There was only one way how the fly could feed itself. That was to smear the essence of the blood over its women and then to possess the warriors of earth, of the dead, or of heaven or hell, to let them travel to the houses of these smeared women. This was how the fly could feed itself. The blood was magnetic to the fly in a strange sense. But often the blood was very salty, making the fly more thirsty, and also wilder. That was also the reason why its men and women who worshipped him were so wild. They were bound together by a strange bloodline. The fly needed royal blood to quench its thirst a bit. That was why it appeared to the king one day. The fly was already full of rage, because it didn't have enough for such a long time. The king and the fly got in a fight, and soon enough the fly had tied the king to a stake and began to sting him in sensitive places to suck the best blood. After that he flew to the royal bloodlines of the kingdoms of the dead, of heaven and of hell. He now wanted to have royal gladiators, to be assured of a potent and perpetual bloodflow. Now the fly became the king of Lakshor, and Edmolin and his woman had to fight in the royal arena's.

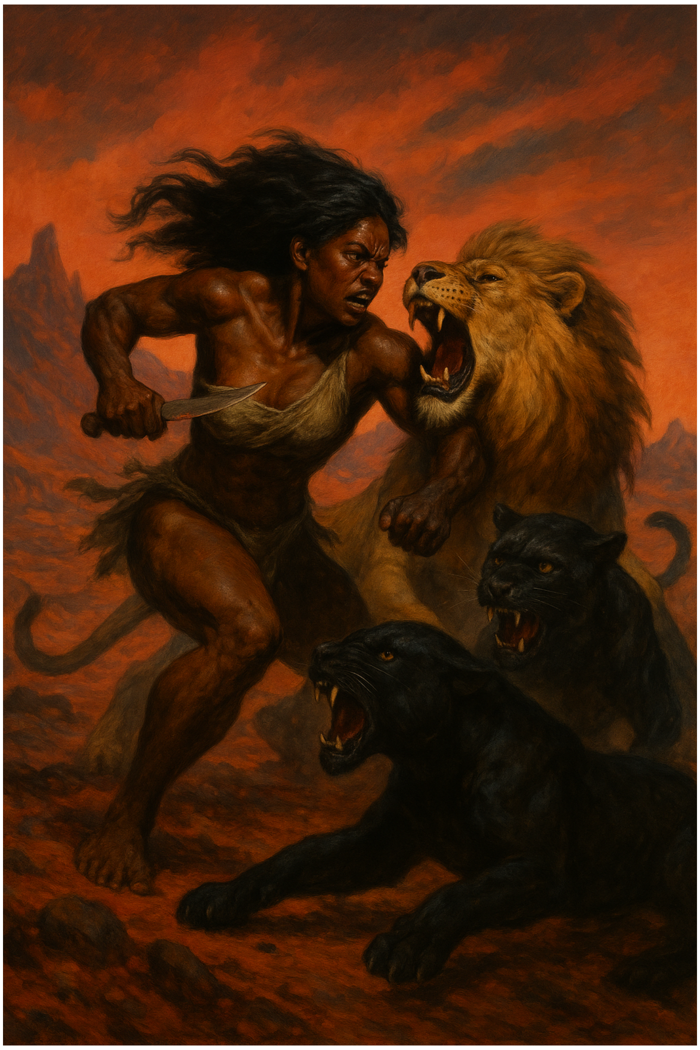
But one day Metulidan with his red guard returned to Lakshor. When they came to the throne of the fly he said : 'I already expected this. Some come to Lakshor just for the blood.' Then his guard, the red giant prince stepped towards the fly, and while the fly shrieked and tried to hit him with his sharp wing, the red giant took his slayersword and hit the fly in its head. The fly was spouting lava now, and lightening came from his eyes. Then Metulidan himself took his slayersword and cut a piece of his wing off. Again the fly shrieked, and flew to the other side of the thronehall. Metulidan immediately turned around, took a waspball of poison in his hand and threw it into the stomach of the fly. Blood was streaming out of the fly, while his head became smaller. This was the most dangerous part of the fight, for Metulidan knew that if its head was small like this it was in a terrible rage, ready to use its most deadly weapons. But if it would use one of these weapons, it could also die itself, and it would at least lose much of its strength. The fly attacked, missed, and started to hyperventilate. In its weakness it floated to the floor, but still the fly was in the most dangerous position, for it could use another deadly weapon now. Suddenly it had used its heartsnake, which pierced Metulidan and the red giant prince in a flash, while the both fell to the ground, losing their soulbeat. Softly and tenderly the fly started to eat from their fallen and paralyzed meat, for it was still very weak. Now the fly could drink from a well of high and pure royal blood.



After awhile friends of Metulidan had called for one of the most feared warrior in and around the realms of Lakshor. It was Witigus, the flyslayer. When he came the fly had already turned Lakshor in doom more than ever before. The fly throned on a perpetual stream of royal blood. 'You will have to surrender your kingdom to me,' Witigus spoke. Witigus would only fight the fly for no less price than Lakshor itself and all its vessels and souls. If someone wanted to call for Witigus for a favour the price was always slavery. Witigus would never take less than total domination. But also Witigus would be nothing but prey to the fly. The fly took his prey to a stake on a high rock in the wilderness, tied him to it, and left. He would be an easy meal for snakes now, and for the birds of prey. Then another man called Metusalach tried to conquer the fly, but he fell into the same fate as Witigus the flyslayer. What has become of all these men who wanted to wage war against the fly ? Their spirits have been thrown into the abyss of Lakshor, while their souls have become gladiators in the deeper arena's of Lakshor. They have searched for the well of blood, but they have become wells of blood themselves, for the fly turned their remains finally into trees of blood. Since then no one was allowed to enter Lakshor than those who had drunk from this forbidden blood. And those who had drunk from it would be damned to stay in Lakshor forever. There was no escape possible. And in Lakshor one was doomed to be a gladiator forever, for here there was the eternal war of the damned.

There was no horror greater than the horror of Lakshor. The fly, it’s king, had the most cruelest ways to let his victims and the breakers of the laws of his kingdom suffer to turn them into living and perpetual bloodwells. Those who became a part of the horrors of Lakshor to become it's finest warriors had to be baptized in these eternal bloodwells first. There was no greater horror than to drink from the forbidden blood, for it would write your name in the Book of Blood, which was a horrible and everlasting traumatizing experience of losing all hope and faith in salvation. There was no salvation left for those who had been tied by their souls to the everlasting horrors of the Book of Blood. Their beings were now filled by such an eternal fear and tragedy making them gladiators of doom, destined to the unbearable grief of eternal dying. There was no pain compared to this.

Men tied to the stakes of the Book of Blood could only cry blood, and whenever they spoke, the only thing coming out of their mouths was blood. This was how the fly dealt with his enemies, and this made him the greatest horror-king ever. No one ever coming to Lakshor spoke about the giants of hell anymore. All they could do was seeing and remembering the horrors of the giants of Lakshor. The day the giants of Lakshor came to hell was a day no one who was there would forget. They came to take gladiators to Lakshor.



But behind the veils of Lakshor a wasp was living, hiding the wells and falls of waspian blood. Whenever a woman died in the arena the wasp came to take her soul away. He would tie her to a stake in his realms, where he would use these women for reproduction. They brought fourth the waspian souls full of the rushing and sensual waspian blood. Then after awhile he would send them back to the arena's. But some of these women he kept for years. He would finally baptize them in his waspian well of blood, to let them become his own gladiators. These waspian gladiators were the most feared, for they could bring the pains of death. One of these women was called Tara from Rhodes, and after a few years she returned to the arena's. She was a woman of such a tranquilizing beauty that she could lure the birds of prey to let them sit on her hand. She had a strength greater than lions, and this was why she always could sleep near them, warming herself in the skincontact she had with them. Oh yes, sometimes they had fights, but Tara from Rhodes would always dominate them by her voice.

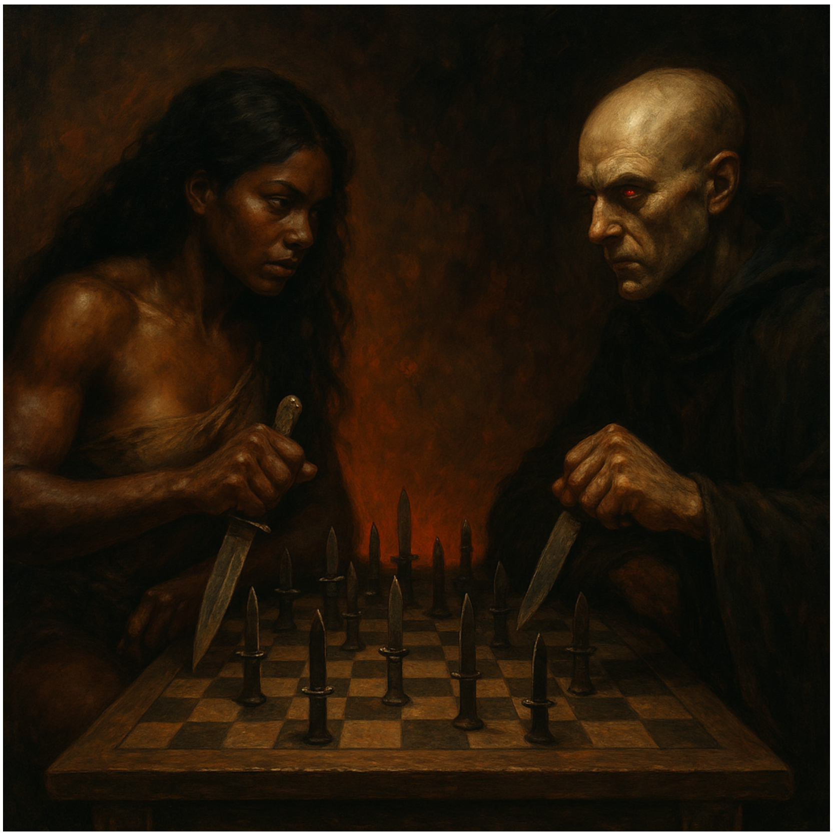
She was an inspiration to the youth in the arena's, mostly when they were in the arena's of lions and snakes. But since the fly found out she had returned from the wasp's place, her skull hangs above his throne. The fly didn't have any mercy to those who had returned from the waspian domain. The arena's of the wasp were foul in his eyes, and one day he invaded the place. He found out about the waspian bloodwells and fed himself.

If anyone was wild, it was Tara from Rhodes. She dived from tall rocks in rivers, she wrestled with bears, apes, and dangerous Martian beasts, and had to survive among the most murderous tribes of Mars. She had a lot of enemies and not many friends. As you can imagine in such wildernesses like the wildernesses of Mars she became a soul-hunter, one of the darkest. If anyone could stir up horror it was Tara from Rhodes. With her lions and panthers she waged wars against the most dangerous tribes. Most of the times she was driven by revenge. She knew these tribes since her childhood, and she still remembered what they had done to her and her loved ones. There was no one darker than Tara from Rhodes the time she was living on Mars. They called her the black snake. She was the most feared of all warriors on Mars in that time. She believed in everlasting war and damnation more than anyone else. She always said it was the well of eternal birth.

Tara from Rhodes was a riddle no one seemed to understand. The tribe where she was born had been enslaved by Gitdugal, the killer-king. He was dressed up by bones and skulls, and his body was covered by white wasp-guards, which would attack any time he spoke. He could take away minds and souls, to turn his victims into zombies. In a huge valley they had to do slave-work. Tara from Rhodes had been saved by a monkey when the zombies of Gitdugal the killer-king invaded the camp of the tribe where she was born. Tara was then just a little girl, and the monkey took care over her for a long time, until another tribe accepted her. But since she grew up and became an outcast there, she started to look for Gitdugal the killer-king, for she wanted to set her original tribe free. But no one seemed to know where the valley was where Gitdugal the killer-king had his slaves. In her search she met Kingul, a black warrior. He knew where the valley was, but they had to be on their guard. They had to travel south for a couple of days, and they first had to defeat the armies of zombie-guards. When they came there they saw warriors of her tribe tied to trees, and from the bushes zombie-guards jumped having spinning swords. These swords were very dangerous for they didn't only kill you, but they also killed your soul and mind. Tara from Rhodes shrieked and yelled, while she took her knife and threw it into the heart of the first zombie-guard. Then she took an arrow from her quiver very fast and with her bow she quickly shot into the heart of the next zombie-guard. Then she took a spear and pierced three of them. But there were so many zombie-guards surrounding them, that soon they got captured in a net. They now had to appear before the throne of Gitdugal the killer-king. It was a strange piramid of many layers like a sort of stairway. On top there was another smaller piramid in which the killer-king sat. Many skulls were surrounding him, and white wasps were coming from his body to cover the net.

When Tara from Rhodes awoke she found herself in a bed in a huge hall. Their were soft penetrating lights coming from small oillamps. A veiled girl entered the hall, to bring her some food. She was a slave-girl but she wasn't from the tribe of Tara from Rhodes. The slave-girl made a sign with her hand, and Tara from Rhodes stood up to follow her. They came in an even huger hall, where lakes of crocodiles were. The lakes were like boiling. The crododiles looked tormented, like they could slide outside the lakes to attack every moment. Tara from Rhodes didn't trust any of them. When she walked over some bridges suddenly a plank cracked, and she slided into the depth. Immediately three crocodiles slided towards her, while she could get herself on the bridge just in time. She had to be very careful. The slave-girl knew exactly where to walk. With a beating heart she followed the steps of the girl accurately. Suddenly a huge and tall coffinlike case of bronze slided out of a wall. The slave-girl stopped walking, and told Tara from Rhodes she had to lie in the case to come to have dinner with the killer-king. Tara from Rhodes refused, but suddenly the slave-girl took a gun, and some men with sunglasses came in through a door, also holding guns.

'Your life will be over, girl, if you don't do what we tell you.' Slowly and hesitating Tara entered the case. Immediately when she laid down the case slided into the wall again. It was very dark inside, but suddenly the walls of the case started to glow. Tara from Rhodes started sweating, while the case turned hotter and hotter. Then flames appeared in the walls of the case. Tara started to scream and shriek. Suddenly there was light everywhere. She could step out of the case, as Gitdugal the killer-king was taking her hand. 'No worries, my lady,' he said. 'Do you want some tea ?'



'No,' Tara from Rhodes spoke harshly, 'you need to free my people.' But Gitdugal showed her the wonderful and lovely, wealthy dinner-table. It was filled with all sorts of tropical fruits, the most strange and rare sorts of meat, and even bones. 'Let us discuss here,' Gitdugal spoke friendly.

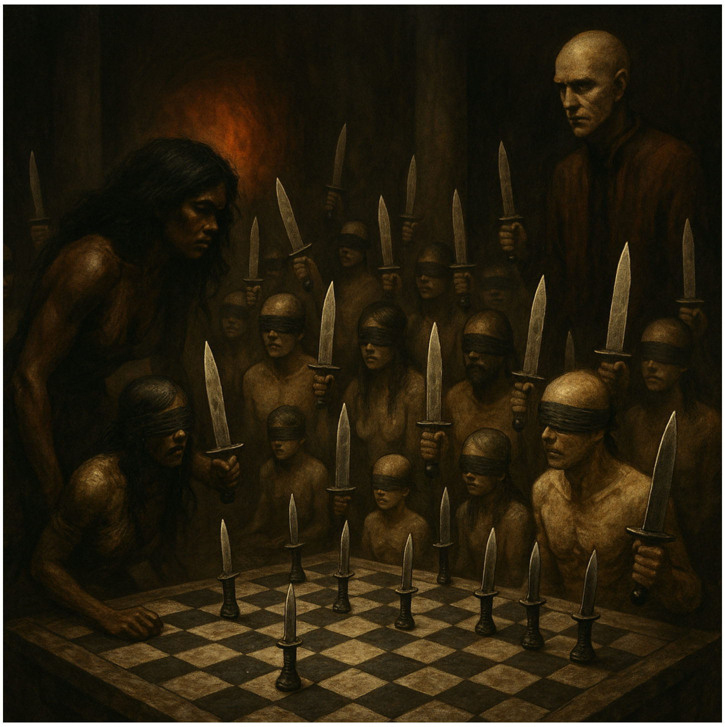
'I do not want to discuss with you, you need to let my people go. I am not hungry,' Tara from Rhodes spoke persistent.

Still the killer-king tried to distract her. 'I'm sure you will like the food. It is from my rare gardens.'

'Well, I do not care about your gardens, but I do care about those who suffer in those gardens, the ones you have burdened with such slavery,' Tara from Rhodes said while her eyes were full of piercing fire. 'I warn you, king of killers, you will not like what I will do to you if you will go on with your games,' she said.

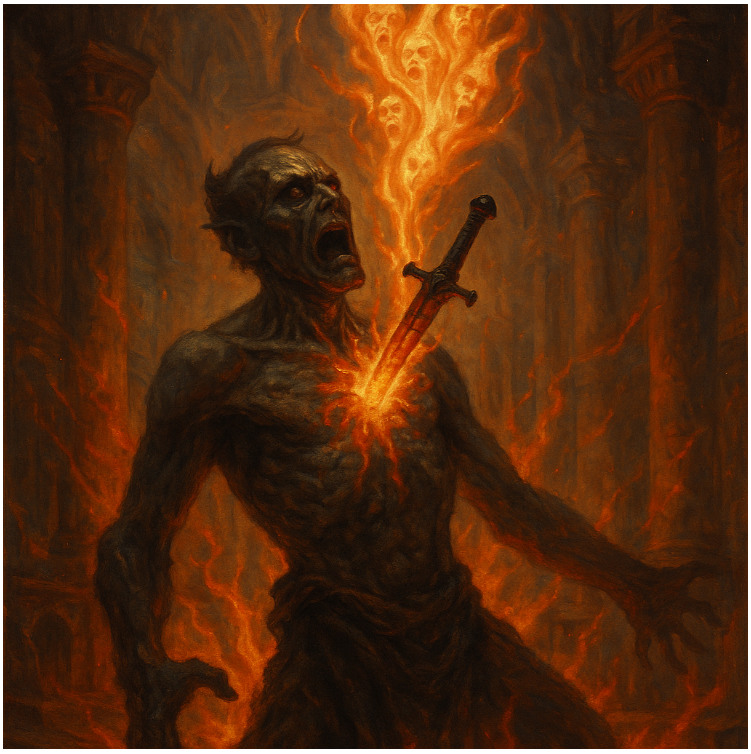
Gitdugal pushed on a button of his table. Tara from Rhodes still hadn't sat down. Suddenly some slaves entered carrying dishes and bags with meat and strange rare vegetables. Gitdugal began to eat. Then after awhile Tara from Rhodes also started to eat. After awhile Gitdugal asked : 'And, did you like the meat of your tribe ?' Tara from Rhodes stood up, and grasped the throat of Gitdugal very tightly. 'It's better you do not do that,' Gitdugal said, still friendly, and then he hit his head against her head. In one moment she was slammed to the ground. 'Now I will eat your brain-meat, lady,' Gitdugal said, 'and it’s juices and blood I will use to wash my dishes and my room. I have a lot of cleaning work to do I see.' But then Tara from Rhodes kicked him in his male parts like a truck crashing through the walls. Gitdugal fell to the ground, and tried to push one of his floorbuttons, but Tara from Rhodes already stood on his hand. Then she kicked his head very hard. But what Tara didn't know was that there were also big spiders under the meat, and they started spitting all sorts of fluids towards her. Tara from Rhodes fell on the ground and lost consciousness. There are not many masters of sleep like Gitdugal. He has all sorts of tropical secrets having their own sorts of fluids, and if such a spider is one of it's deliverers in some cases, then that is very okay with Gitdugal.

It was like the veils of the brains of Tara from Rhodes were breaking, and she didn't know where she was, or how long she had been unconscious, when she slowly woke up again. She felt very dizzy. Tara from Rhodes felt her blood was growing stronger by all these strange attacks. It was like her body just didn't give up. Others would have died already in the dangerous and tropical mysteries of the realms of Gitdugal with all these poisons threatening the heart and the blood. Some of these rare fluids should have blocked the nerves of the brains in certain area's so that Tara from Rhodes wouldn't be able to breath and move anymore, for to breathe you needed to use the muscles of your lungs. But Tara from Rhodes seemed to be immune to these lethal threats. Maybe that was because she just lived the wild life. She didn't believe in society. She believed in the industry of nature, by which she could raise the more refined forms of immunology, not poisoned by the paw of civilization. It was the force of civilization she hated, for it bound her to something she was not from origin.



Finally another slave came to the place where Tara from Rhodes was now. It was a dark cave, smelling like the slime of snakes and spiders. The slave told her that Gitdugal wanted to play a game with her : Wild Chess. It would be a living chess, for people of her tribe would be the pawns. If she would win she would free her tribe, but if she would lose, then Gitdugal would take her skull. To Tara from Rhodes it seemed unfair, for on both sides the pawns would be from her tribe, but she didn't have another choice. Gitdugal called it the Chess of Knives, for all living pawns had to carry a knife, and when they had to move they had to push the knife to the next field. Tara from Rhodes only had one demand : All the pawns had to be blindfolded. Gitdugal agreed but then he called for some slaves to sting the eyes out of all the living pawns. Tara from Rhodes was in rage, but now she would play this game to the end, to set her tribe free.

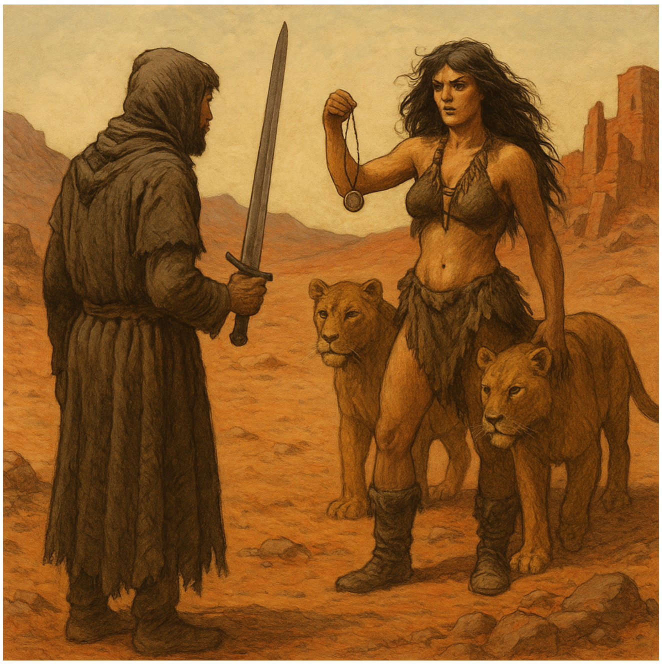
So many of her tribe were slaughtered that day in this Wild Chess, but none of them could win the game. So the killer-king decided to play it again. Tara from Rhodes was desperate, but she didn't have another choice. And again, many of her tribe got slaughtered in this cruel game. But this time none of them could win either, and they had to play it again and again. After awhile she found out that the rules of the game were designed in a sense that no one could ever win. She found out it was a trap. If this would go on, then no one of her tribe would finally survive. She then got into such a rage that she took one of the Knives of the Wild Chess, and threw it into the heart of Gitdugal. This knife was charged with so much blood of her tribe, and with their souls of the dead, that it pierced itself in vengeance and hysterical rage into his heart. 'So, you don't want to play the game anymore I see,' Gitdugal said. 'Then we need to throw away it's pawns.' Then he called for some slaves, and they had to throw all the remaining pawns of her tribe off the rocks. In the depths of a ravine their souls shattered on the rocks, taking away their minds and lives. The horror was only raising for Tara from Rhodes could see how the ghosts of her loved ones got attracted and absorbed by the skull of Gitdugal. 'Now you have offered them an even greater slavery : the slavery of the damned.' Gitdugal said. 'Let me know when you want to play again.'



Emotionally absorbed by rage she followed him to the place he slept. He slept on a huge bed surrounded by big spiders and snakes. As she came closer his guards attacked her, but she was so full of concentrated rage that she slayed them all in short time. Gitdugal was so tired that he didn't take notice of her. But as she was coming close to his body and could even hear and smell his breath the white wasps of his body were attacking her, trying to poison her mind. But Tara raised her shield and in full rage she pierced one of his own spears through his lungs. She found this spear in his room, but he stood up and smashed her to the ground. Then he raised her up above his head and threw her through the windows above his bed. Tara fell into a river close to a waterfall. Where was she ? She had never seen this land ? On the other side of the river she saw slaves working in gardens and on fields. Were these the famed Gardens of Gitdugal ? There were trees of meat growing here, and trees of all sorts of strange organs. But there she saw Gitdugal coming. 'I wasn't done with you !' he shouted. Tara ran away through the gardens and fields. She first had to make up another strategy, for battling against him made her very tired and even confused.

I do not know the rest of the story, as she couldn’t tell me for some reason. Sometimes she just stopped telling, and then she went to sleep. Later I found out that she partly couldn’t deal with it. She knew where all her stories could lead her. She was always the flame in my heart, but since she’s gone it’s different. I can hang on to a lot of stories she told me, but most of these stories do not have an end, or she just didn’t tell how it ended. It keeps me thinking. She could be fragmentaric at times, but that was her code to survive.

The Moloch Butterflies



In the depths of the desert, here, I had my tent. I watched around and saw nothing but skulls. I raised my sword and roared. This domain was mine. She came closer to me, this barbarian girl, with her big cats. She showed me her necklace, but I was scared. Women had often witchy powers to enslave people. I stepped back, went closer to my tent. ‘I don’t want to hurt you,’ she said. But then she changed into a ghost and sped towards me while she shrieked, ready to enter my spirit, to possess it. I used my sword well, and soon she was vomitting on the ground.

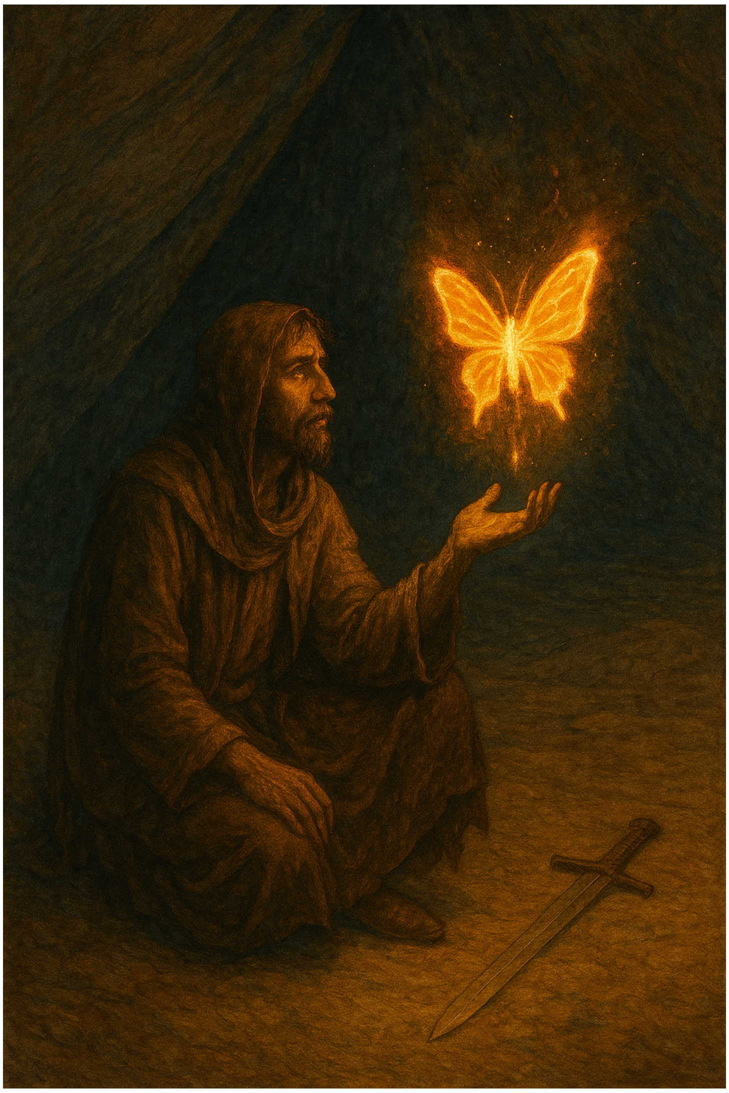
Some of my dogs started to eat from her soul. I knew she was just an illusion here in this place. Lions were roaring in the distance. The air was hot. It made my skin almost bleeding. I licked from my skin. It was salty. Soon I was on my chariot, hunting, for swines. My blade was glittering in the sun light. It was actually not a sun but a huge planet close to mine, with enough heat and light to create a day. I licked my blade, and suddenly I stood before this pigmonster. It slowly turned into a woman. More pigbeasts appeared, and they all changed into women. Where was I.

Soon I was in an arena, a place of dust, slime and blood. She stared at me. Soon we were in a wrestling. She was mean, a lowhearted creature. She bit me like a hyena. Soon I was chained. Everything went so fast. They put me in a cage under a ball which looked like a small sun.

‘Dandrar,’ someone said. ‘Finally we have you. We have waited so long for this moment.’ I looked up and saw a woman with big feathers on her head, like a princess. ‘Queen of Babylon I am,’ the woman said. ‘Oh the queen of the heavens ?’ I asked.

She came closer to my cage. ‘The butterfly pact,’ she said slowly. The butterfly girls were almost buttnaked. Were these her angels ? They had strange scars on their buttocks, like strange stretched nipples. She went with her hand over it, and milk streamed forth. ‘My women are feeders,’ she said.

‘Where am I ?’ I asked.



‘Close to Moloch,’ she said. ‘And die in the fire, child of hell, and drink from his milk.’

I can’t recall what happened next but I woke up in my own tent, while glowing butterflies were flying around. I knew I would die if I would touch one of them. I slowly grasped my sword and chased them away. As soon as I struck them it was like my sword was boiling. I threw it away and stared at it in fear. These butterflies could give the strangest hallucinations, all leading to torture and death. I woke up just in time. They were the Moloch-butterflies, and touching them was even deadly.

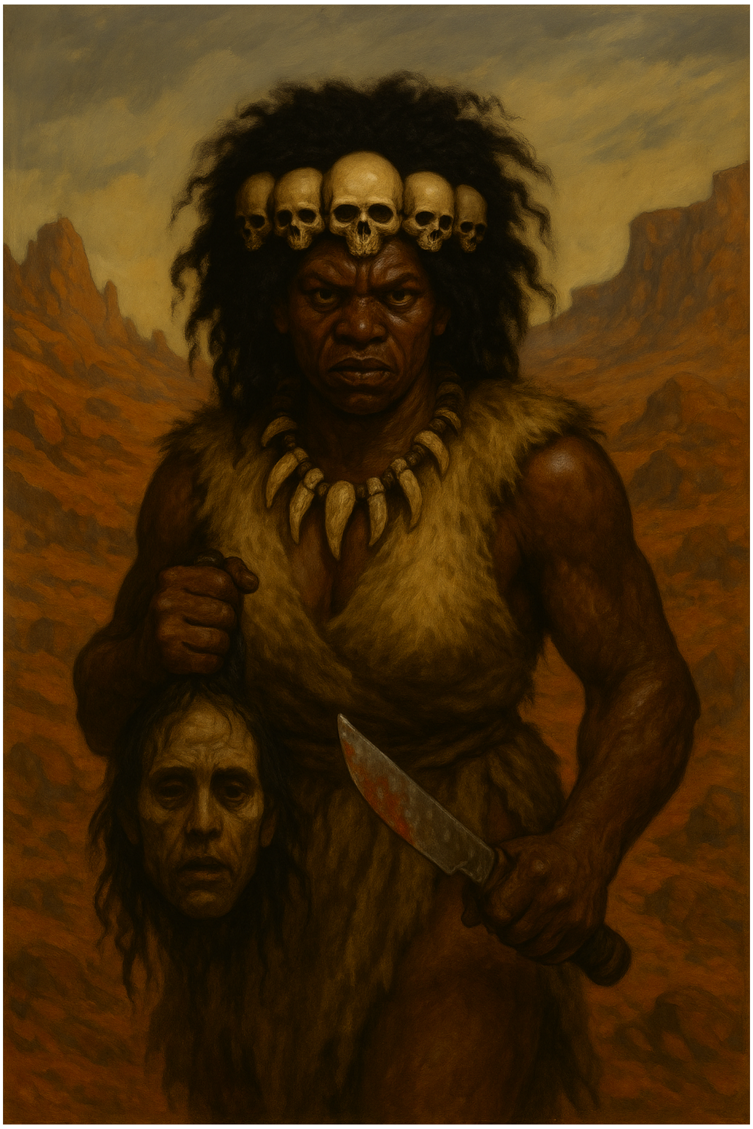
Sharla the
Head Hunter

Chapter 1. Worshippers of Strange gods

Chapter 2. Ship of Fire

Chapter 3. The Deception

Chapter 1. Worshippers of Strange gods



No one would expect Sharla the Head Hunter to return after she was chased away by Tara from Rhodes. But it was only to prepare a harder attack. She went to her kingdom of heads again, where she had the skulls of her enemies on stakes, and even those of the ones she once loved. She was the horror of the Mitstik River, a huge river-area on the south of Mars. No one could really explain an encounter with Sharla the Head Hunter. She took minds and souls away, to finally take their heads. She was obsessed with heads. She painted them, decorated them with feathers and jewelry, and people said she only grew wilder since the death of her father, the horrible Skeleton Eater. Whenever he was hunting, he didn't care about the meat. He only ate bones. Sharla the Head Hunter's father was a huge skeleton himself, decorated by strange misleading ornaments. Whenever people were looking at him, they lost so much of their lives. He was a strange and dangerous man, even to his daughter. It was like by his death Sharla broke so many chains of herself, yes, she was the one who had killed him.

For years she stayed on her side in the West after she had been defeated by Tara from Rhodes, but after these years she returned to the Eastside of the river. No one could really explain what happened, but she had become so much more powerful. Some said she had eaten the soul of her father.

Tara from Rhodes stood before her cave washing herself by the lake. Warriors of her tribe came to her, telling her that Sharla the Head Hunter had returned. At that moment they heard shrieking. It was Sharla the Head Hunter, coming towards them. Like a monkey she jumped from tree to tree. There was something around her neck, a snake. Tara from Rhodes took her spear, and told the warriors of her tribe to go behind her. But it was already too late. Sharla the Head Hunter had pierced on of them by an arrow. 'Run away !' Tara from Rhodes shouted to the others, but also another one was already pierced by an arrow. Then Tara threw her spear but she missed. Quickly she took one arrow from her quiver and shot it, but missed again. How could she miss two times ? What was going on ? Then Sharla the Head Hunter stood before her raising her sword. Tara took another spear and they had a fight. Sharla the head Hunter smiled. 'If I will kill you, I will kill your tribe after it, do you think that's okay ?' Tara stang by her spear, but missed : 'No,' she shouted. 'I told you already to leave this place.'

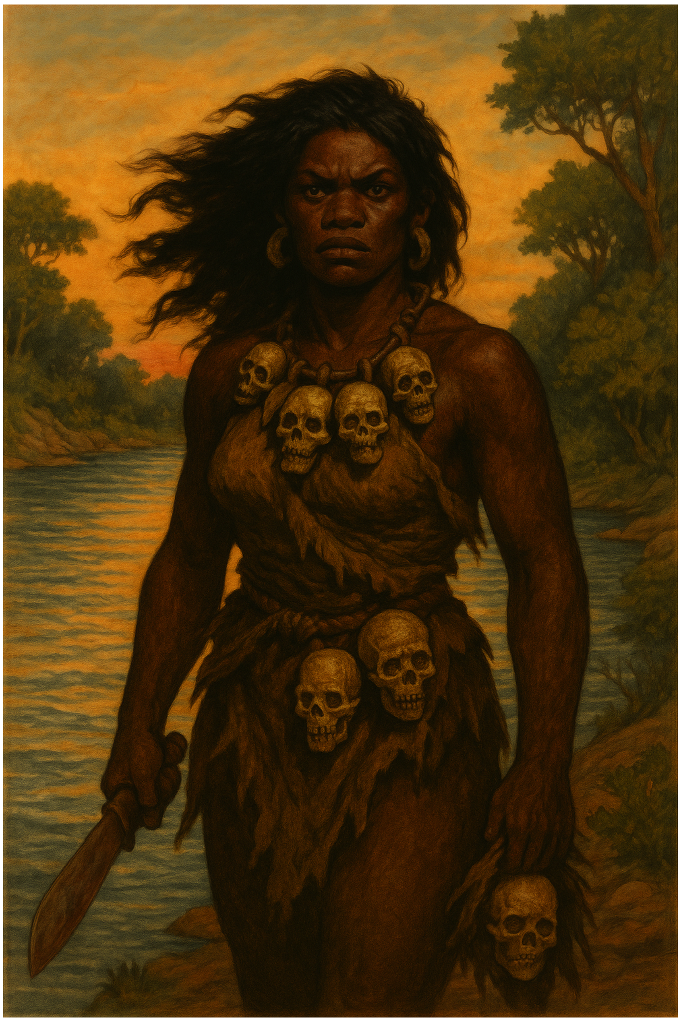
'So why ?' Sharla the Head Hunter asked ironically, 'don't you like to see heads all over the place ?'

'Well,' Tara replied, 'most of the time I like to see heads on bodies, but in this case I like to see a headless body.' Then she fiercely tried to hit Sharla's head with a knife. But Sharla jumped aside and kicked Tara against her head. 'Bull's Eye !' she shouted. Then Sharla's snake jumped on Tara and tried to strengle her. 'Have fun together,' Sharla said ironically, 'I will return when dinner's ready.' And then she left the place. Tara had a hard time overcoming the snake. The snake had a tighter grip than the usual snakes, and she tried to smash his head with a hard object in her surroundings. But the snake moved all over, and also coiled itself around her legs. Tara got troubles in breathing, and the snake was very slimy.

Suddenly she heard singing. Someone was washing herself in the lake. It was Sharla the Head Hunter. 'This place will be mine in short time !' she shouted. Suddenly Tara could throw the snake off of her. She threw the snake into the lake, and continued her fight against Sharla the Head Hunter. 'Oh, come on then,' Sharla shouted, 'I will eat you like a shark.' Tara jumped on Sharla the Head Hunter and pushed her further into the lake. Crocodiles from all sides came after Sharla the Head Hunter and she had to fight for her life. But her snake swam towards the crocodiles and took them in a tight grip, while they were slowly dying without having any breath.

These were the days of Sharla the Headhunter. She had many fights against Tara from Rhodes, for she wanted to have her skull and those of her tribe. But one day tragedy struck Sharla the Headhunter, for her snake thought it would be time to add Sharla's head to the collection of heads in the Westside of the river. The snake also thought it would be time to swallow Sharla's soul. No one knew how such a deep friendship could turn over in such a hate, causing Sharla's death. As the warriors of Tara's tribe were in extasy about Sharla's fatal friendship with the snake, and as they were feasting the whole night, they didn't know about a greater threat which was awakening, the very snake of Sharla the Head Hunter itself, with the captured soul of Sharla in it's erected pride. The snake had only grown stronger, and taller by eating the meat and soul of it's best friend. Now the snake had become the Head-collector, but it also collected souls.

The warriors of Tara's tribe didn't know about the danger moving slow towards their wigwams. While they were still feasting the snake slided into the first wigwam, taking some children away. Soon they discovered about the sudden disappearance of the children, and their feasting started to turn into mournings. The snake took the children across the river, and teached them how to hunt for heads. The snake also teached them in the way they developped a rage against their own tribe. When the children had grown up they formed their own tribe preparing so much vengeance to attack their original tribe one day. The children didn't only worship the snake, but they also worshipped Sharla the Head Hunter. They brought sacrifices to her everyday, a great part of the prey. Tara had searched for the children for a long time, but now she was about to cross the river to search in Sharla's territorium. Somewhere in a different part of the river the children's tribe was moving towards Tara's tribe. They only wanted to have one thing : heads.



The children who had grown older now had become skilled warriors. They wanted to cause the fall of their original tribe, as they were bitten in their childhood by the snake. He bit them in their skull where he placed a shiny yellow amulet to dominate them. Now they were in it's evil hands, enslaved by the tormented soul of Sharla the Hunter. All they could do was giving expression of her rage and hate. These evil children started to slaughter the children of their own original tribe. And when Tara returned to the tribe she was already too late. She couldn't find the children behind the river but she found a shiny yellow amulet like a tall cube. She found it in the temple of the snake, while some puppets of clay were sitting in front of it. She knew enough. That was the sign of domination. Now she finally had found the children it was already too late. She stood on the hill watching that what had happened, raised the shiny yellow amulet and spoke loud : 'I think I already know what is going on here.' The children turned around and when they saw the amulet it was like they were losing all their strength. Tara knew she had to be very careful now, for she couldn't underestimate the works of the snake. But the fact she had the amulet in her hands now gave her much power over the children. The amulet wasn't in the hidden temple of the snake anymore. Tara knew where this temple was, for it used to be Sharla's temple. And in a sense it still was. Suddenly some of the children started to have much pain in the back of their heads. They grasped their heads with their hands, and slowly Tara walked towards the children. They wouldn't have any chance against her, for no one could be really successfull against Tara from Rhodes. She was still the Warrior Princess of the primeval, like the black snake. And none of these kids would even think about attacking her. Tara took her knife and started to cut the shiny yellow amulets out of their skulls, as she knew what was going on. She could feel the mighty vibration of the amulet. After awhile she had many pieces of it in her hands, while the children weren't themselves anymore. It was like they were awakening out of a long long dream. Some started to cry, while others stared like frozen to the ground. The snake had done this job when the children were too young to realize what was going on, and he did it while they slept. Tara tried to explain them what was going on, and she did this with all the love she had. Since the children had invaded the tribe the survivors fleed away. No one could begin anything against such powers. They had the strength like wild animals. Now one knew that they had been gifted by the snake of Sharla the Head Hunter and her very soul. But now Sharla had been overcome and defeated again. The only thing was : Where was the snake ?

Tara knew they were in danger now, for the warriors of the tribe could return to see what had happened. They were on a hunt today, while the women and children were in the camp alone. What would they do when they would find out that so many children had been slain today ? A dark feeling had entered Tara, something which was telling her that something was going on. She suddenly thought about the snake. What if he had already possessed the minds of the warriors ? She had to do something with the amulet now. But she didn't know what. She laid the pieces in a circle and started to think. Now the amulet was hers, and she wanted to spare the warriors in their feelings. She knew where they were hunting today, and she hoped that they would stay the night there. So she went there, and fortunately when she came there it was already night and they were all sleeping. She had cut the amulets into many pieces, and by the amulet she wanted to lure them away from the danger. She knew that the snake had bound their hearts and minds by the attack, and she knew that if they would find out about their children, the snake would use them to destroy even more of the tribe. Tara knew the sorceries of the snake, and the danger of Sharla's soul. They wouldn't rest before they had torn the whole tribe apart to devour it. The snake was a possessor of minds, and Tara exactly knew which steps the snake could take to prepare the possession. The snake had almost reached it's goal with the warriors of her tribe. Slowly Tara crept to the weapons of the warriors of her tribe, while they were sleeping. In all the weapons she tried to put small pieces of the amulet. She succeeded.

Now the only thing she had to do was taking the children away across the river. They couldn't be in their original tribe anymore. She also had to find the ones who had escaped since the children invaded the tribe. But when she had reached the tribe the snake was there. It would be a horrible fight. All her rage she concentrated on the snake, while she took her sword and entered the arena. The snake had grown so much bigger now since the last time she had a fight with it. She wondered where the children were. Maybe they had already been gone to their tribe behind the river. Tara was in rage. 'I want my amulet back,' the snake roared. 'No !' Tara screamed, 'you will not get it, for your games are over.'

'You do not know with which powers you are playing, girl !' the snake roared, while it's tail slammed her in her face. 'By this amulet I will bring Sharla's soul into the minds of the tribe,' the snake spoke loud. 'But the amulet doesn't belong to Sharla's soul anymore,' Tara spoke, while she pierced her sword into the tail of the snake. 'It's her bones, it's made of her skeleton,' the snake spoke in strange delight.

'But now I possess it !' Tara shouted, 'Now I am the master of my tribe, as I am it's guard.'

'But the soul of Sharla needs to come alive again, or she will devour the tribe totally, to swipe it's souls away from Mars. She will gather her bones by herself, and then come alive again,' the snake roared. And then something strange happened. The amulet started to shriek, and in the distance the warriors of Tara's tribe were coming home. They were in panic, and some were hysterical. 'Our weapons are moving and shrieking !' they shouted. 'It's the amulet,' the snake roared. 'It is time Sharla the Head Hunter is coming alive again.' Then the warriors fell on the ground and worshipped the snake while the snake was coiling around their weapons. Tara knew she was losing the grip on her tribe, and she knew that the only place she could gather her powers again to break this sort of witchcraft was the realm of Sharla the Head Hunter across the river. She now had to make that kingdom hers, or she would be enslaved by it's powers herself.

But when she came across the river the children's tribe had possessed the whole area and had become evil again. They even didn't remember Tara. They didn't recognize her. She hoped the children didn't know about the hidden temple of the snake, so she went there, but they also possessed that temple. The kingdom of heads was against her. The children had strange weapons made of shiny yellow bone. It looked much like the amulets, and maybe it was the same : the bones of Sharla the Head Hunter. All the children were saying she would come alive tonight to gather her bones. Tara started to scream : 'No ! You have been possessed again !' But the children were shaking their heads. They only wanted to have one thing now : The head of Tara from Rhodes.

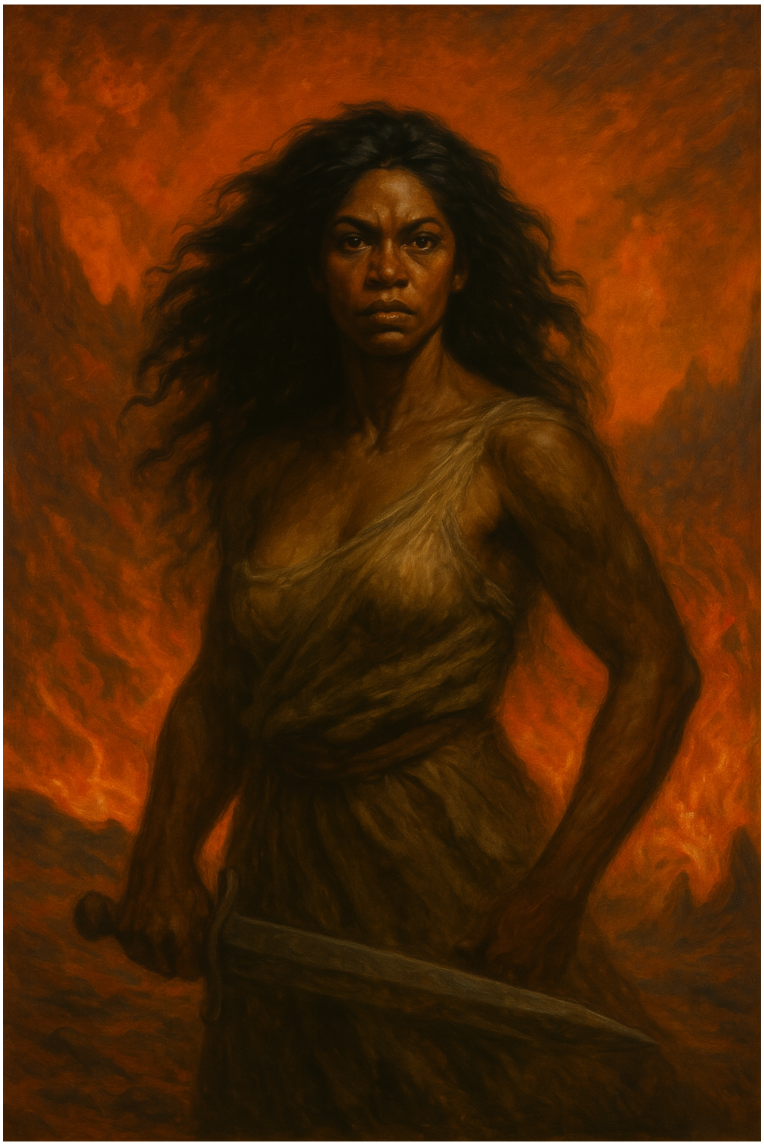
All of a sudden she got terrible headaches like ringing bells in her head. She grasped her head, but the pain only got worse. It was like a million wasps were stinging her brains, and her body got overheated. She almost fell to the ground, but she could catch herself on her knees, took her knife and cut into her skull where the pain was coming from. Soon she took a piece of the shiny yellow bone out of her head. She screamed and shrieked while she was raising it high. How could that happen to her ? How could such a piece be in her head ? Was it done by the snake ? And when ? Suddenly she heard screaming. The children were grasping themselves and each other. Some of them had pain in their legs or arms. Soon Tara had cut more pieces of the shiny yellow bones out of them. They knew Sharla would also look for these pieces.

Tara wanted to know about the secret of the shiny yellow bones of Sharla the Headhunter. She decided to search in the temple of the snake. A lot of strange altars were here, and strange stakes with totems. A lot of skulls were here. They were carrying strange smells, and were often painted and some had feathers. In the bigger skulls pythons and other big snakes were living. In another room of the temple there were also skulls, but most of them were very small. These could be the skulls of small children or monkeys. In a bigger one a hairy spider lived. The room was full of spiderwebs and behind the room there was also a small room with a low ceiling. Suddenly a piercing voice shouted : 'Tara from Rhodes ! Your friend Sharla has returned.' A huge skeleton of yellow shiny bones was standing in the opening of the small room. The snake was around it's neck. 'Yes, I am Sharla the Head Hunter, but I only need some skin, and I thought, maybe I can use yours,' the skeleton spoke. 'No way !' Tara said loud. 'I will break any bone of you to let it become my second skin. I feel so naked, I need a dress.' Suddenly fourpointed blade crashed the skeleton from behind. It was one of the children. But soon the bones were gathered again by a strange power. 'Go away, kid !' Tara shouted, 'There's witchcraft going on here, you better protect you soul !'

Tara knew she had to find out about this secret or it would enslave her forever. 'By the force of Soms !' she shouted, 'tell me your secret.' Suddenly a wind from behind crashed the skeleton again and a huge skeleton stood in the dooropening, breaking the bones with it's teeth. Then after that he started to eat and absorb the bonemass. 'I have finally come to life again,' the skeleton roared. 'Who are you ?' Tara asked with a loud commanding voice. 'I am the Skeleton Eater, her father. She had killed me and captured my soul for such a long time in the form of a snake. But now I have come to take revenge.' The snake was sliding and coiling throughout his bones. 'But what did your soul do to my tribe ?' Tara shouted loud, 'This snake has killed and possessed so much of us.'

'I was possessed too, by the meat and the soul of Sharla I once absorbed, but before that I was her slave, after she killed me and brought my soul alive again in the form of a snake. To eat her meat and soul was the first step in delivering myself from her,' the Skeleton Eater spoke. 'Now by eating her bones I hope I will break the possession.' Tara wanted to leave the temple now, but he was blocking her. 'Now all I want is your head !' the Skeleton Eater spoke loud. But the kid with the fourpointed blade had returned and crumbled the Skeleton Eater with it. 'Oh, my magical powers will gather my bones again,' the Skeleton Eater roared. 'I told you to go away !' Tara shouted loud. 'These kids won't listen.' The Skeleton Eater stood up, and said : 'I will eat and devour your bones, and I will use your meat and brains as windowdecoration.' The kid was running away again, but the Skeleton Eater ran after it. The snake slided out of the body and attacked Tara. 'Come Tara !' the child shouted. 'I need to show you something.' Tara kicked the snake aside and ran outside. The child showed a shrine to Tara. 'Here we used to worship the Skeleton Eater,' the kid said. The Skeleton Eater had disappeared. But soon Tara found out he was devouring the bones of the children, leaving their meat behind. 'Why do you worship such a god !' Tara shouted. Then the kid asked : 'Which god do you worship then ?'

'That's none of your business, but try Soms,' Tara replied harshly. Now she had directed someone to Soms she had to leave the place and the whole domain of where she was born, the area of the Mitstik River. She gave this district over in the hands of Soms, for she didn't know it anymore. It was like she was chained by the tight chains of her youth. She wanted to forget about it all to start a new life. So she moved even more to the south, to the area of the legendary Mokotte Fields on Mars. This was even further in the south than the valleys and gardens where her original tribe had to work for the killer-king Gitdugal in earlier times. She had to travel a few weeks to come close to the Mokotte Fields. Here she would start a new life. She had become very tired of the riddles of the realm of Sharla the Head Hunter. She wanted to escape it's grip forever. In the valleys of the Mokotte Fields there would live a lot of



sorcerors who could help her further. She had to go there, for an invisible force she didn't know of was taking her breath away and slowly strengling her.

In front of the Cave of Viviktus, the Wild Sorceror, there was a lair of a giantspider. The giantspider was very hairy and even had feathers. Tara wanted to go to him for help, but not much did she know about the horror of that place. No one could enter the Cave of Viviktus than the ones who could dominate it in wrestling. As she was very tired it became a long fight. The giantspider was about to strengle her. It was like this animal was taking her last piece of breath. But after awhile Viviktus the Wild Sorceror came outwards. 'I think I will have mercy on you this time, lady. You seem to have traveled a great deal. Come inside for some warm drinks,' he said. Tara stood up, while the giantspider left her alone. Inside there were halfnaked warriors sitting at bars. Most of them were looking at her. 'Oh, I want to fight against her one time,' one was shouting. Most of them were barefooted, but some of them had very strange boots or shoes. They looked like killerboots. Viviktus, the Wild Sorceror, was leading her along the bars, and soon they were in the arena's. All sorts of wild animals had to fight against the different warriors. Some of these animals she had never seen before. They were monstous Martian animals. Behind the arena's there were some arena pools. Viviktus told her that if she would defeat all these warriors and animals, he would help her.

Nights of fights followed in which she slayed the greatest warriors. Sometimes she had to fight three or four of them at the same time, and sometimes even a whole group. They called her Tara the Slayer. By the grace of Viviktus not all these warriors would die by her hands or weapons, but she defeated them all. 'There's dread on you,' Viviktus said. 'They fear you like nothing else. I must say I applaud your strength and persistence. You are cleansing your soul from witchcraft here for a great deal.' Then Tara took Viviktus tight by his throat and said : 'You Martial bunch of shatters, you promised me to help me !'

'What I tell you is the truth,' Viviktus continued, 'but I will also give you help by myself. That I did promise and I will do, as I am an honest man.'

'Some souls have reached a certain immortality, and will return on and on, after they have been killed. They have drunk from the sources of eternal death and birth, and they have a great immunity. Now these so-called immortals prey on mortals. And if they have fixed their mind on you, they can eat you all the way to your inner city, where they can and they will finally enslave you,' Viviktus said, 'It is finally by this eternal slavery you will find the well of eternal liberty, the freedom of the mind.'

'What are you trying to tell me, sorceror, are you predicting me something ?' Tara blasted. But then she got very silent. After awhile she said : 'So you will tell me that Sharla the Head Hunter will return again to me to finally enslave me ? How ?' The sorceror nodded. 'I think you are very wise, my girl, and I think you will deal with this as you continue your path. You will find out that my words to you were true.'

And as the sorceror predicted Sharla the Head Hunter came to stalk her again, and this time she slayed Tara and took her soul to the realms of Lakshor, where she became an enslaved Gladiator.

Chapter 2. Ship of Fire

After Sharla the Head Hunter took Tara's skull, Tara's soul found a fierce fire-ship in the deathrealms of Mars. She knew Sharla still wasn't done with her, and she would hunt for her soul, but on this ship she would have the chance to escape from Mars, as it became more and more a horror to her. On the Martian River of Death she was on the ship, but gladiators kidnapped her. These were the times she felt very weak. But as soon as they heard of Sharla the Head Hunter they became friends with Tara. They had to fight Sharla together. It was a warrior-boat, the one where she was now. The ones of this boat were escaped gladiators and now they were waging war against the tribes along the Martian River of Death to make prisoners for their gods. They first wanted to sacrifice Tara also, but since they had an encounter with Sharla the Head Hunter they knew they could better not touch Tara. She might help them against Sharla's attacks. What they didn't know was that Sharla attacked them because of Tara. If they would find out that Tara was the cause of this all, they would have sacrificed her for sure. They were cannibals of the highest grade on the Martian River of Death, since the gods teached them how to survive on these horrible rivers. Tara tried to escape from them many times, but all these attempts finally failed. It was like they were watching any move of her.

They didn't have much jewelry, but what they had was very precious. They had some python stones, and by that they could capture the minds and the souls of their prey. It also prevented them against any soul-enslavers. Most of the time these stones were planted in their weapons.

The friendship between Tara and them didn't last long, for once in the night Sharla the Head Hunter came to the boat. She killed the gladiators, took their heads, and captured Tara's soul. Sharla took Tara to the arena's of Lakshor where she sold Tara as a gladiator. When she could finally escape from Lakshor she returned to Mars again in search for the warrior-skulls of her friends who got beheaded by Sharla the Head Hunter. She would do anything to bring her friends back to life again. She also knew that their souls had been captured in their skulls, and that Sharla would have those skulls in her collection. So she returned to the area of the river of Mitstik, in search for Sharla the Head Hunter. Tara had now grown so much in skills, in wisdom and in so many other things. She was now ready to finish Sharla the Head Hunter forever to set her friends free.

But when she came there, it wasn't what she had expected. Although she easily found the skulls and used an oracle to talk to them, her friends didn't remember her, and didn't want to have anything to do with her. First she was in great grief because of the answers, but later she knew she first had to defeat Sharla the Head Hunter, because she seemed to dominate their mind and memory. But Sharla was nowhere to be found. Her realms were lonely and wild, almost depressed. Later she asked the oracle where Sharla was. The oracle answered that on the westside of Sharla's realms there was a new city. She would be there to raise it and rule it. The name of the city was : Eliphant City. Eliphant City would be the darkest city of Mars, a breeding place of sorcerors, witches, necromancers, thieves, assassins, soul-hunters and a lot more. Tara had the feeling she would go to the circus. Here Miss Sharla the Head Hunter would have her place now. Or would she be even Mrs. now ? Tara had so many cynical thoughts about Sharla in her head. It irritated her the way Sharla was. Oh how she would like to smash her skull into shatters to hang her brains in the trees.

In Eliphant City there were circuses and even fairgrounds indeed. But also lots of arena's. The City had a great deal of slaves, and there were enough slave-hunters operating from this side. The city also had a great deal of story-tellers and artists. Often they were wanderers coming to sell their art. In many cases they were thieves as well. Hermund Grottenweiler was a man having the most beautiful women in cages. Here they had to dance, sing and strip, but they were never allowed to come out of their cages. They lived in these cages like animals and slaves. No one was allowed to enter their cages. It was a big deal. Hermund Grottenweiler was one of the richest men of the city. He was a drinker of beer, and often he went to prostitutes to have some fun. He was also a gambler, and a lot of people said he was a thief. Men used to throw a lot of money through the bars to let the women do whatever they wanted them to do, although they could never be touched. Tara was watching some of their shows. Sometimes there were more women in one cage, and often it was nothing but brute fights. Tara knew that if she wanted to conquer Sharla the Head Hunter, some of these women could be of good use.

'How much do these women cost ?' Tara asked Hermund Grottenweiler.

'They aren't for sale,' the man said gruff. 'but I can pay you a lot if you want to work here.' Tara took the man by his throat and said : 'You mean bastard, I give you twelve-thousand tanarings for two of them.'

'Twelve-thousand tanarings for two women ? Are you crazy ? You could buy my whole business with that, but okay, I give you two women by choice,' said the man slowly. Twelve-thousand tanarings was a lot of Martian money. If you had a hundred tanarings you were already rich. 'I'll pay you later, bastard,' Tara said, but the man wanted the money now. Then someone else whispered something into the ears of the man, and after awhile the man said : 'Okay, you will pay me later, choose your two women.' So Tara took the best warriors, explained them what they had to do, and then they went on in search for Sharla the Head Hunter.

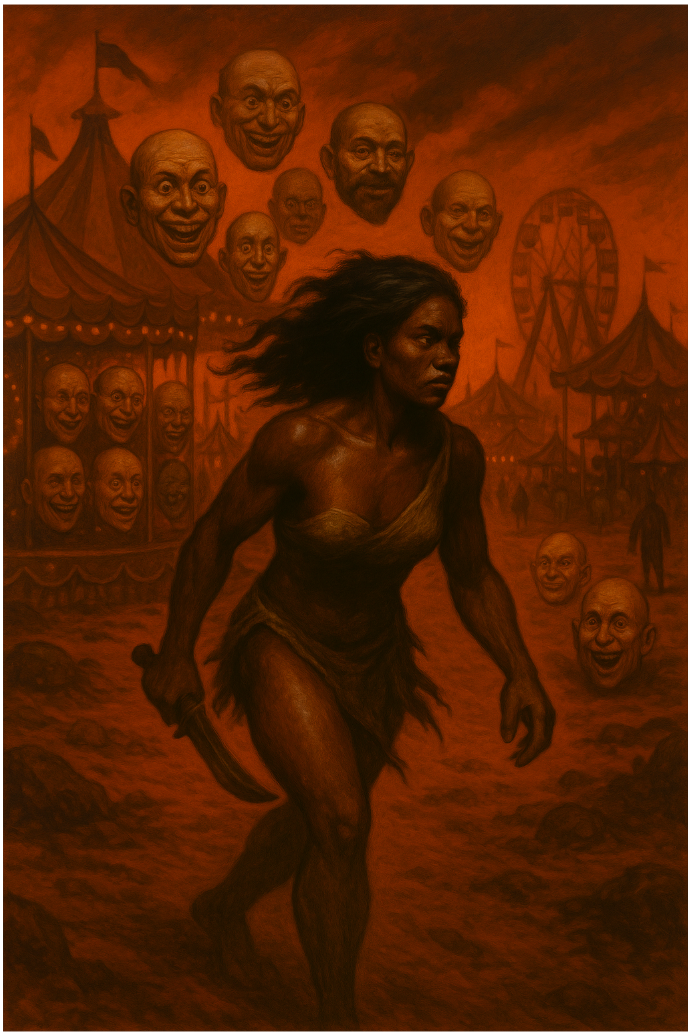
One of the women was called Lirsja, and the other Spirtja. They were both sisters or more accurate : half-sisters. Tara loved them from the first moment. They were tender, but at the same time they were bloody passionate warriors. They told Tara that they had been gladiators since childhood. It made one part of them very sensitive and another part of them numb and harsh. They had also been prostitudes for awhile, until Hermund Grottenweiler bought them. They told Tara that they had always been slaves, one or the other way. Their parents sold them to a slave-caravan when they were only three years old. This was because they lived in such a poverty. Their parents thought that when they would become slaves at least someone was taking care of them. And since they were eighteen that person was Hermund Grottenweiler. Tara didn't say anything. They were on a way to a pub, where Sharla the Head Hunter would be, according to some. It was the Great Python Pub. It was already late. Tara opened the door and looked around. The pub was full of half-naked gladiators. Most of them were women, and Sharla the Head Hunter was there also. Tara took her knife and shouted : 'Sharla the Head Hunter, friends always return. How's life, bitch ? What have you done to the gladiator-skulls of the Martian River of Death ?'

Sharla started smiling. 'What are you talking about, dear ? I have done so many things to so many skulls, so what is the deal ?' Also other women were smiling. Tara stepped on a table and smashed a hanging lamp in pieces. 'Now listen you foolish pighead, we are not here to play any games tonight. Game's over, my friend. I'm here to smear your name on the wall like wallpaper. You will not even know your name anymore,' Tara shouted.

'Oh,' Sharla said, 'but who are you anyway ? I do not remember your face.'

'I am Tara the Slayer of Tartarus, Tara from Rhodes. I am the black snake,' Tara shouted in full pride. 'Everyone knows me.' People started to laugh and Sharla said with a tight face : 'It doesn't say anything to me. Maybe our encounter wasn't impressive enough.' Then Tara jumped to the table where Sharla the Headhunter was, and kicked her in her face. Some women at the bar slowly slided with their hands to their knives. 'I have risen from the dead to come in vengeance because of all what you ...' but further she couldn't come. Someone had put a knife into her spine. Tara fell to the ground, while her two women came into action. They took some chairs and started to use them as rods. One of them took a leg-knife and threw it into the heart of Sharla. 'Sorry, I do not know you,' she whispered soft in Sharla's face, 'but it seemed you made a big mess here.' The other woman took the knife out of Tara's back, but Tara felt very sick. Some other woman tried to further protect Tara. Then Sharla stood up like a dead body. 'What a pity now,' she said, while she looked at the woman who had thrown the knife into her heart. 'I do not have a heart.' And then she started to laugh hysterically. Some men had entered the pub. They had sunglasses on, and they started to talk with the barkeeper. Sharla soon directed herself to them. 'Listo and Carshan, you come at the right moment.' The two man took their guns and began to shoot some women. Tara rolled herself under a table, and prayed for strength. She almost never prayed, but this time she had to. She prayed to Soms. The other two women of her had also dived under a table, while Sharla walked towards the door. 'Don't let them escape,' she said, and then she left. It was a horrible fight against Listo and Carshan and some other women. But soon from the arena behind the pub women were coming to help Tara and her women. One of the women took the two men by the throat and threw them through the window.

Later Tara and her two women wanted to leave the pub to search for Sharla again. But the barkeeper took his gun and said : 'You aren't going anywhere.' What then happened Tara couldn't recall, but she woke up in the fields of Tartarus, while her back was pierced on a stake. Her feet were tied to the stake, and her hands were tied behind her back. She was surrounded by huge skeletongods with wolfskulls, all dressed in black garments. One or two of them were in shiny purple, but still dark. They had voices like speaking mud, and one of them ripped her skin open to take her heart out of her chest. Tara was screaming and shrieking. 'No one will ever defeat me,' she suddenly shouted calm. But one of the skeletongods took an axe and cut her head off. The head rolled into a valley and doom came all over the place. Sharla was walking towards them 'Wow,' she said, 'now that was wonderful.'



Tara was now nothing but a ghost, so full of rage that she enslaved many souls. She wanted to live for vengeance the rest of eternity. Tara descended into so many unknown realms of Tartarus. Here she would find out about the secrets of Sharla the Head Hunter. Tara would become a horror greater than she ever was, to survive this greater horror. By the unknown squeezers of Tartarus she would have a bit more density, but what if she would only encounter more and deeper shatterers ?

But the only thing Tara encountered in the depths of Tartarus was a machine with so many bloody heads from the decapitated ones. This machine had been called the Machine of Democracy for such a long time. The bloody heads would keep all the souls of Mars possessed. Inside it was a strange arena where the ghosts of all these souls were gladiators. The strange arena brought forth the fluids of Everlasting Damnation. Tara was drinking from this well without hesitation. The fluids were frothing like beer, and Tara didn't want anything else than to drown in it. But suddenly strange creatures were jumping on her head sucking her brains. They looked a little bit like octopi and spiders, but actually these were the heads of decapitated pythons. They were called the brain-slayers. Tara had come into the extasy of slaughter, took a word from the machine and started to slay the heads in a bloodbath. So much strength was coming over her from unknown sources. The heads didn't have skulls, only brains. Also the heads of the strange machine didn't have any skulls inside. They looked like strange rubber or plastic masks. Some jumped on Tara's head, trying to mask her to devour her brains and abundant slaughter. Suddenly she was in a shock, after she had slaughtered many of them. She had also seen the heads of her gladiator-friends who were beheaded by Sharla the Head Hunter, and whose skulls she found when she returned to Sharla's realms. What had become of them here ? Their skull-less heads were now puppets of this strange machine. Suddenly the machine started to spin like crazy. The heads started to discuss and argue like crazy. 'Now shut up !' Tara shouted. She went inside the machine again to see if the ghosts of her friends were in there. Several ghosts came towards her. These were the ghosts of her friends, and now they were very understanding. 'Yes, Tara, we have been imprisoned by this strange arena-machine again,' she said to her. So this was the machine they had escaped from before they went to the Martian River of Dead where they encountered Tara. 'How can I help you ?' Tara asked.

'We cannot escape Tara,' the warriors said. 'We escaped only to finally sink deeper in this machine. This is our fate.'

'No !' Tara shouted rude. 'I will fight this machine, and free your souls from it.' The warriors sighed. 'Tara,' one of them said very tenderly, 'the more you fight this machine, the more it will swallow you. We invite you to come with us. Come with us, you won't regret it.'

'Oh, you lost your head,' she said to the ghost. 'There's nothing I can do for you. I will leave.'

But the ghost took her in his arms and said : 'You cannot leave. No one leaves this place. You can only leave to finally realize you have sunk deeper in it.' She felt the sweetness and softness of the ghost entering her soul. It was like they were seducing her to stay with them in this doom. 'I don't want to lose myself !' Tara shouted.

'You will only find yourself, ... finding yourself back ...' the ghost said, while he showed her his tragic face. 'There's Everlasting War here, and that is our fate.' Tara tried to shake the ghost away from her, but the more she did that the more she felt he was coming over her. It was like he was slaying her brains. Suddenly, and she didn't know where it came from, she had the strength to push him away. 'I will slay Sharla the Head Hunter,' she said with a tight face, 'and then I will return to this place.'

Tara climbed her way up to where she came from, in search for Sharla the Head Hunter. The blood was rushing through all of her veins all of a sudden. But the heads from the Machine of Democracy seemed to follow her in a distance. She had now seen the secret of Sharla the Head Hunter.It was a strange fairground of heads, keeping all the politics in the upper worlds of Mars possessed and by that the politics of so many other planets. But it was lawless politics, a strange arena called Democracy letting the Everlasting Blood of Damnation flow, frothing through so many souls.

But more and more heads from this strange machine from the depths of Mars were surrounding Tara, and she started to lose strength. She remembered the words of the ghosts, and suddenly she totally lost it. The heads seemed to come out of nowhere, and it didn't stop. 'Be ready for the masses of democracy,' one ghost had told her. It was like this arena was giving birth to so many children .... all beheaded. Tara heard their shrieks in her mind, slaying her mind. It was rushing through her veins. She had mixed feelings inside indeed, like Everlasting War inside, like Everlasting Democracy. She fought, but she remembered : She was fighting herself. All these heads were hers, like her split identities. It was a Psychiatrist deep inside her mind, such a crazy one, but also nothing but a puppet from this strange fairground of Mars, coming forth from the depths of Tartarus, only to sink in it deeper. Tara had lost so many of her good thoughts, and now she was delivered into the hands of this undescribable being. She had been torn apart by it, but she still wanted to kill Sharla the Head Hunter. But where would it bring her ? It seemed to be a stupid idea, the more she thought about it, meaning nothing, absolutely nothing in the progress of the universe.

As all these puppets were slaves of Sharla the Head Hunter, Sharla was also their slave, and Tara also. Who was really the king, and who was really the slave, when all these masks would be torn off ?

She was just imprisoned by this crazy fairground called Democracy. She had to fight her mirrors, for her mirrors were fighting her, showing up .... often masked ...

What if Sharla the Head Hunter was just one of her mirrors. She couldn't stand the thought. She would want to slay that mirror, but even more : to enslave it. For there was no such thing as Death.

It was only a strange mirror on a strange fairground of Mars, opening the door to so many other mirrors. One day Tara got the shock of her life. She saw her own head hanging between all the other heads of doom. That meant that she had already been a part of this machine, but for how long already ? And this probably meant that also her own ghosts had to be somewhere in the arena inside the machine. So she went inside again, and asked the other ghosts about it. 'I want to show you something,' one of them said. It was one of her warrior-friends she had encountered on the Martian River of Death. The ghost asked her to come with him to a room behind the arena. He opened a cupboard there, where she saw ten to twenty of her own ghosts hanging there at a rope. They were like fleeces. Tara was shocked. 'How do I bring them alive ?' she asked.

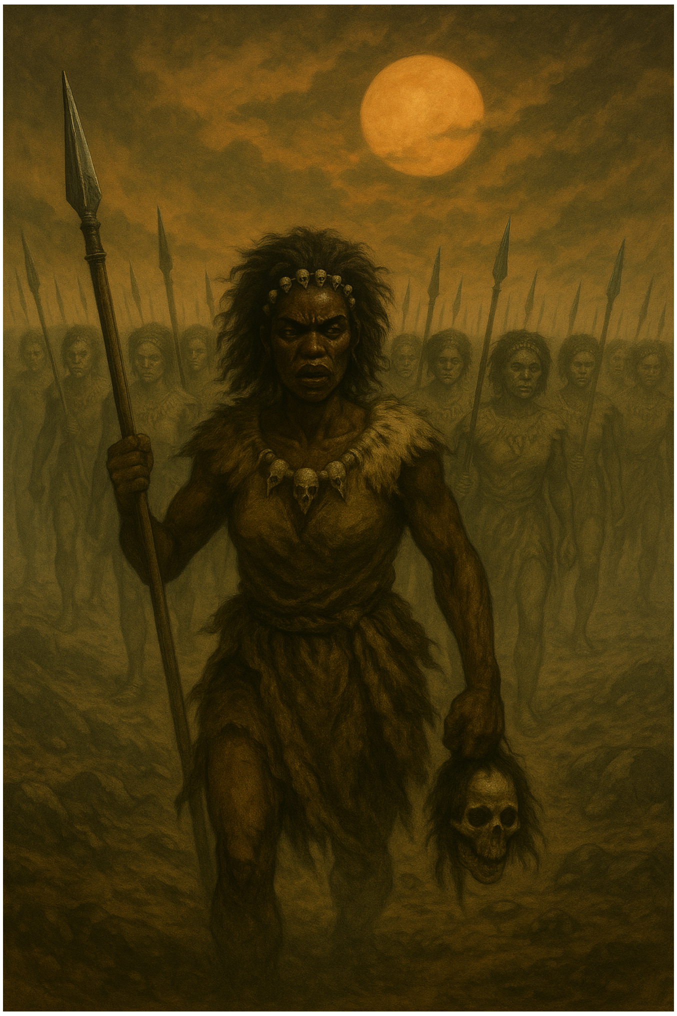
'Just by accepting it all,' the ghost said tenderly. It was like Tara was melting inside. She just wanted to let it come over her. A bell was ringing. The fights and wars between the ghosts started again. Tara had to fight against a friend of her. 'Tara, you must accept Democracy,' the ghost said. 'It is the Lawless. It is the Head Hunter and the Head Brooder.' Snakes got born here, as the children of the gladiators. But these children had no bodies ... only heads.

Tara knew that these heads would tear her mind apart again and again. They were brain-slayers, and it would lead her deeper into this strange abyss.

Chapter 3. The Deception

'Blood you deserve, blood to stream out of your body and die !' Someone shouted on a slave-market of Eliphant City. Tara had returned to this city, but she was wandering there a bit aimless. She didn't want to watch how this yelling would turn into another bloody fight. Oh yes, she loved fighting, more than anyone else, but sometimes she had hard times in watching it. As she walked further over the market, she saw a young slave getting beaten up by his master. Tara didn't think a second and slaughtered the slave-master to set the boy free. Sometimes she just had such strange impulses. Where they were coming from, she didn't know. She entered a pub. The barkeeper was doing some dishes and brought a beer to her in grace. 'You look thirsty, lady,' the barkeeper said. Tara drank the cup empthy within seconds. Then she stood up and walked to the girl-room of the pub. Here some slave-girls worked as whores. A tall young lady with star-earrings stood in the door-opening. 'Anyone heard of Sharla the Headhunter ?' The girl shook her head. Tara saw a newspaper and took it in her hands. Her feet were sweating because of the heat in the pub. It was a hot day in Eliphant City. In the newspaper there were many stories about heads and headhunters. The last page of the magazine had some news. There was a picture of a wild-bearded head of a savaged man called Ijupitor who had been beheaded. If someone wanted to use the skull-less head for black magic he would have to call a certain number. Tara's feet started to sweat even more. There were also some smaller pictures of bison-heads, and finally a small note about Sharla the Head Hunter. But almost everything of the note had been torn away. Like someone wanted to keep the information. 'Now, don't mess with me again, girl,' Tara said to the girl, 'Have you heard of Sharla the Headhunter, yes or no ?'

The girl said yes softly, and asked Tara to come with her. They went on a stairs and came into a dark room. The room was a bit colder, and there was also a lion caged there. 'Do you work in circus ?' Tara asked. 'Yes, also,' the girl said. Suddenly Sharla the Head Hunter stood in the door-opening. 'I will not waste my time killing you,' Tara said. 'But I will enslave you in this bottle,' and then she grasped an empty bottle from the table. 'I swear by Soms you will vanish now into this bottle,' Tara shouted. Sharla didn't move, but then she fell forward. A man in a bear-suit was standing behind her, having a strange small machine in his hand like a calculator. Also on Sharla's back there was a strange small instrument. The man took off his bear-mask, and fell in worship before the feet of Tara. 'Oh Tara,' he said, 'I have heard so much about you. I am obsessed with you. I made a Sharla puppet to let her have a double. I also want to make one of you. I work in circus you see,' the man said. He talked a bit confused and Tara kicked him hard in his face. 'Do you really think I have time for this nonsense ?' Tara said unfriendly. But Tara now knew she had to be careful, for maybe the Sharla she met in the other pub was just a double also, made to distract her. Was that the reason why she finally ended in Tartarus that way ? She should have known better, for necromancers often used doubles to deceive and enslave their victims very subtle. Some necromancers had built thousands and thousands of doubles, and then they masked them so that they could build whole cities. Would Eliphant City just be a trap to let Tara suffer in Tartarus ? And maybe there were even more victims. It all started since Tara was looking for her friends in the realms of Sharla. Here she found their skulls and an oracle. The oracle had directed her to the Eliphant City.



Tara returned to Sharla's realm where the oracle was still speaking. Still the skulls of her friends were there, and the oracle had grown so big now. It had firy flames, and it was like a well of fire now. How could she trust such an oracle anyway. And how could she further know if something was a double or the original. Suddenly she heard strange marching in the distance. When the sound came closer it was like a strange song. It was a ghost-army full of the doubles of Sharla the Head Hunter. Slaying or even believing such a double could already be very dangerous.

Tara knew that to be immune against an army of doubles you needed to produce your own doubles, so that she could multiply herself. She was kneeling down before the skulls of her friends and she started to brood them. Suddenly they stood before her. The army of Sharla’s doubles had to vanish slowly. They were awakening the giants of Tartarus.

They set so many worlds in fire, and she could forget and remember so many things. It was like she was made for this, but her demons always said to her : she created herself.

If she could she would turn everything into doom. She wanted to create a total new world. And if that was her fate : She wanted to do it in Tartarus. She was the vulcano, letting the dogs of Tartarus out. She was of Tartarus, Tara of Tartarus.

And as she was writing in the scrolls of Mars : She slided deeper, descending with her ghosts into the mists of Tartarus, into it’s ravines.
